

FROM THE MAGAZINE RACK NO. 90  
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THIS IS CARTER COUNTRY (PEOPLE)  
HOW CULTURES COLLIDE (PSYCHOLOGY TODAY)

ANCHOR: HERE IS-----WITH FROM THE MAGAZINE RACK -- VOICE OF AMERICA  
SUMMARIES OF ARTICLES ON TIMELY TOPICS FROM AMERICAN MAGAZINES.  
TODAY, FROM PEOPLE MAGAZINE, A PERSONAL GLIMPSE OF U.S.  
DEMOCRATIC PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE JIMMY CARTER, BY THE PEOPLE  
WHO WATCHED HIM GROW UP. AND PSYCHOLOGY TODAY EXAMINES SOME  
OF THE REASONS WHY PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT NATIONS MISUNDER-  
STAND EACH OTHER. FIRST, OUR VISIT TO JIMMY CARTER'S HOME  
TOWN OF PLAINS, GEORGIA.

REPORTER: PEOPLE MAGAZINE REPORTS THAT JIMMY CARTER'S ANCESTORS ARRIVED  
IN SUMTER COUNTY, GEORGIA MORE THAN 200 YEARS AGO. THEY  
SETTLED IN THE LITTLE TOWN OF PLAINS, WHICH TODAY NUMBERS 683  
SOULS. JIMMY OFTEN ASCRIBES HIS SELF-CONFIDENCE TO THE LOVE  
AND SUPPORT OF HIS FAMILY AND FRIENDS. PEOPLE CORRESPONDENT  
JOYCE LEVITON TRAVELED TO PLAINS TO TALK WITH THEM, BEGINNING  
WITH HIS 26-YEAR-OLD SON, CHIP, WHO TOLD HER WHAT IT WAS  
LIKE TO GROW UP IN A SEGREGATIONIST TOWN WHEN HIS FATHER  
BELIEVED IN RACIAL INTEGRATION:

VOICE: "WE WERE TAUGHT AT A VERY EARLY AGE THAT EVERYBODY WAS EQUAL,"  
SAYS CHIP. "WE HAD THE ONLY LIBERAL PARENTS IN PLAINS, AND I  
GUESS I SUFFERED. I USED TO GET IN FIGHTS EVERY DAY AT SCHOOL.  
BUT ALL THIS HAS CHANGED," CHIP OBSERVES. "THE ONLY RACE TALK  
HERE NOW IS THE POLITICAL RACE."

REPORTER: CHIP REMEMBERS HIS FATHER'S STRUGGLE TO TURN HIS MODEST PEANUT  
FARM INTO A LARGE WAREHOUSING-RETAILING-FARM OPERATION.

REPORTER: JIMMY CARTER OFTEN WORKED 18-HOUR DAYS, HIS SON RECALLS, DOING  
(CONT'D) EVERYTHING FROM DRIVING TRUCKS TO LOADING THEM WITH 100-POUND SACKS OF FERTILIZER. AND COUSIN HUGH CARTER, WHO IS NOW RUNNING FOR JIMMY'S OLD SEAT IN THE GEORGIA STATE SENATE, REMEMBERS THAT JIMMY WAS ENTERPRISING EVEN AS A BOY:

VOICE: "'JIMMY AND I GREW UP TOGETHER,' HE SAYS. 'WE DID ALL THE THINGS BOYS GROWING UP IN PLAINS DID.' THEY WENT TO CHURCH AND 'SOLD BOILED PEANUTS ON THE STREETS TO MAKE SPENDING MONEY.' FOR REASONS LONG FORGOTTEN, HUGH'S NICKNAME WAS 'DEEDIE' AND JIMMY'S WAS 'HOT.'"

REPORTER: JIMMY'S FIRST-GRADE (PRIMARY SCHOOL) TEACHER, MISS ELEANOR FOREST, REMEMBERS CARTER AS "A GOOD STUDENT, COOPERATIVE. I CAN'T SAY HE WAS THE SMARTEST BOY I'VE EVER TAUGHT," SHE TOLD JOYCE LEVITON; "I'VE TAUGHT A LOT OF SMART BOYS -- BUT HE WAS AMONG THE TOP TEN." AND MISS ELEANOR SUMS UP, IN REPORTER LEVITON'S WORDS, "AS IF PENNING A NOTE ON A REPORT CARD: 'JIMMY IS SUCH A HARD WORKER AND HE'S SO DETERMINED. I THINK HE'S GOING TO WORK JUST AS HARD AS PRESIDENT AS HE DID IN SCHOOL.'"

NEXT, JOYCE LEVITON TALKED TO HENRY JACKSON, A FIFTY-NINE-YEAR-OLD BLACK CITIZEN OF PLAINS WHO HAS SEEN RACIAL ATTITUDES IN THE TOWN CHANGE. WHEN CARTER WAS GOVERNOR OF THE STATE, LEVITON REPORTS, JACKSON WAS ELECTED A MEMBER OF THE PLAINS CITY COUNCIL. HE GAVE THIS EVALUATION OF THE CARTER CHARACTER:

VOICE: "'I'VE BEEN KNOWING (KNOW) JIMMY CARTER SINCE I WAS A CHILD,' SAYS JACKSON. 'HE'S JUST LIKE YOU SEE HIM -- SMILING. I'VE NEVER SEEN HIM MAD. THE CARTERS ARE A FINE SET OF PEOPLE. YOU SEE THEM TODAY AND YOU SEE THEM TOMORROW AND THEY'RE THE SAME. JIMMY DON'T CHANGE. WAY BACK THERE, WHEN THERE WAS A DIFFERENCE IN THE BLACK AND THE WHITE, THAT DIDN'T MAKE ANY DIFFERENCE TO THEM. I'M PRAYING FOR JIMMY. WHEN YOU'RE CONNECTED WITH THE MAN UP THERE, YOU CAN'T LOSE.'"

REPORTER: JIMMY'S NEIGHBOR P.J. WISE, A HOSPITAL ENGINEER, TOLD REPORTER LEVITON HOW HE AND CARTER WORKED SIDE-BY-SIDE FOR RACIAL HARMONY IN PLAINS, TALKING WITH BOTH BLACK AND WHITE PEOPLE TO KEEP THE PEACE AT A TIME WHEN BOTH THREATS WERE NOT UNCOMMON. HE REMEMBERS HOW JIMMY REFUSED TO DO SPECIAL FAVORS FOR HIS FRIENDS WHEN HE BECAME GOVERNOR OF GEORGIA. "'IF JIMMY DIDN'T SEE THE NEED,'" P.J. SAYS, "'THEY WOULDN'T GET ANYTHING. JIMMY WON'T SELL HIMSELF TO ANYBODY.'" AND FINALLY, JOYCE LEVITON TALKED WITH JIMMY'S 77-YEAR-OLD MOTHER, LILLIAN, WITH HIS TWO SISTERS GLORIA AND RUTH, WITH HIS BROTHER BILLY, AND WITH HIS 6-YEAR-OLD DAUGHTER, AMY. SHE FOUND THAT WHILE MISS LILLIAN CONFIDENTLY LOOKS FORWARD TO LIVING IN WASHINGTON, THE OTHER MEMBERS OF THE CARTER FAMILY WOULD BE JUST AS HAPPY STAYING AT HOME. PERHAPS BILLY, MANAGER OF THE FAMILY PEANUT BUSINESS, PUT IT BEST:

VOICE: "'I'M PROUD FOR JIMMY BUT I'M GOING TO BE RIGHT HERE,' HE SAYS. 'I'VE TRIED SMALL TOWNS AND I'VE TRIED LARGE TOWNS AND I JUST WANT TO STAY IN PLAINS AND RAISE MY FAMILY.'"

REPORTER: EDWARD T. HALL IS A PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY WHO HAS SPENT MANY YEARS TRYING TO UNDERSTAND HOW PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES RELATE -- OR FAIL TO RELATE -- TO EACH OTHER. GROWING UP AMONG SPANISH-AMERICANS AND INDIANS IN THE AMERICAN SOUTHWEST, HE NOTICED EARLY THAT, IN HIS WORDS, "PEOPLE'S MINDS WORK DIFFERENTLY, AND THAT DIFFERENCE DOESN'T DENOTE INFERIORITY." AS AN ADULT, HE WORKED WITH HOPI AND NAVAJO INDIANS FOR THE UNITED STATES BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS; HE LED A BLACK ARMY REGIMENT DURING WORLD WAR TWO; HE WORKED FOR BOTH THE ARMY AND THE NAVY IN THE PHILIPPINES AND THE MICRONESIAN ATOLL OF TRUK; THEN HE HELPED THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO TRAIN TECHNICIANS ABOUT TO BE SENT TO WORK WITH UNFAMILIAR CULTURES OVERSEAS. ALL THESE EXPERIENCES LED HIM TO HIS MOST FAMOUS DISCOVERY, SPELLED OUT IN HIS BOOK THE SILENT LANGUAGE: NAMELY, THAT NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION IS JUST AS IMPORTANT AS SPOKEN LANGUAGE WHEN PEOPLE FROM DIFFERENT CULTURES INTERACT. HE DISCUSSED HIS IDEAS WITH PSYCHOLOGY TODAY EDITOR ELIZABETH HALL, WHO ASKED HIM HOW IGNORANCE OF "THE SILENT LANGUAGE" AFFECTS U.S. RELATIONS WITH CHINA. HERE IS HIS ANSWER:

VOICE: "ALL HUMAN BEINGS ARE CAPTIVES OF THEIR CULTURE. WHEN DEALING WITH THE CHINESE, WE ARE APT TO TRY TO READ THEIR TRUE INTENTIONS FROM WHAT THEY DO RATHER THAN WHAT THEY SAY. BUT IN SO DOING, AND BY ASSUMING THAT BEHAVIOR MEANS PRETTY MUCH THE SAME AROUND THE WORLD, WE ANTICIPATE THEIR ACTIONS AS IF THEY WERE AMERICANS -- WHEREAS THEY READ OUR BEHAVIOR WITH STRONG CHINESE OVERTONES. THAT COULD LEAD TO SERIOUS MISUNDERSTANDINGS. FACED WITH A TROUBLESOME SITUATION, THE

VOICE;  
(CONT'D)

CHINESE WILL OFTEN ACT AS THOUGH NOTHING HAS HAPPENED. THEY BELIEVE THAT ONCE ONE ACKNOWLEDGES AN EVENT, THEN ONE MUST TAKE ACTION -- AND ACTION MAY BE VEY, VERY SERIOUS. THIS IS WHY THE CHINESE MAY SEEM TO IGNORE OUR ACTIONS IN ONE INSTANCE AND BE HYPERSENSITIVE IN ANOTHER. WE MISREAD THEIR INTENTIONS BOTH IN KOREA AND IN VIETNAM."

REPORTER: PROFESSOR HALL WENT ON TO EXPLAIN THAT MISUNDERSTANDING BETWEEN CULTURES IS USUALLY MUTUAL:

VOICE: "IN VIETNAM, WE MISREAD CHINESE INTENTIONS BY THINKING THEY WERE MOTIVATED THE WAY WE WERE AND TOOK THEM TOO SERIOUSLY; IN KOREA WE DIDN'T TAKE THEM SERIOUSLY ENOUGH. THEY TOLD US WHERE THE LINE WAS, BUT WE DIDN'T BELIEVE THEM. IN THE SAME WAY, THE CHINESE MAY FAIL TO SEE WHEN WE ARE VERY SERIOUS, AND THEY MISREAD THE SIGNS IN OUR ACTION CHAINS. WHENEVER THE MEMBERS OF ONE CULTURE BELIEVE THAT ANOTHER POSSESSES NO SUBTLETY, AS SOME CHINESE APPARENTLY BELIEVE OF US, IT IS A CLEAR SIGN THAT THE FIRST CULTURE HAS GROSSLY MISUNDERSTOOD THE SECOND; I KNOW OF NO CULTURE WITHOUT SUBTLETY."

REPORTER: PROFESSOR HALL DRAWS A DISTINCTION BETWEEN WHAT HE CALLS HIGH-CONTEXT CULTURES, WHERE A PERSON'S BEHAVIOR IS LARGELY DETERMINED BY HIS PLACE IN THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE, AND LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES, WHERE BEHAVIOR IS HARDER TO PREDICT AND ALL BUSINESS AND OTHER AGREEMENTS MUST BE SPELLED OUT AND, USUALLY, WRITTEN DOWN. IN THE PROFESSOR'S WORDS:

VOICE: "IN SOME CULTURES, MESSAGES ARE EXPLICIT; THE WORDS CARRY MOST OF THE INFORMATION. IN OTHER CULTURES, SUCH AS CHINA OR JAPAN OR THE APAI CULTURES, LESS INFORMATION IS CONTAINED

VOICE;  
(CONT'D)

OP T THAT'S WHY AMERICAN BUSINESSMEN OFTEN COMPLAIN THAT THEIR JAPANESE COUNTERPARTS NEVER GET TO THE POINT. THE JAPANESE WOULDN'T DREAM OF SPELLING THE WHOLE THING OUT. TO DO SO IS A PUT-DOWN (INSULT); IT'S LIKE DOING YOUR THINKING FOR YOU."/

REPORTER: PROFESSOR HALL LISTED SOME OTHER WAYS IN WHICH HIGH-CONTEXT AND LOW-CONTEXT CULTURES DIFFER:

VOICE: "IN GENERAL, HIGH-CONTEXT CULTURES CAN GET BY WITH LESS OF THE LEGAL PAPERWORK THAT IS DEEMED (THOUGHT) ESSENTIAL IN AMERICA. A MAN'S WORD IS HIS BOND AND YOU NEED NOT SPELL OUT THE DETAILS TO MAKE HIM BELIEVE. A FRIEND OF MINE IN

OP T THE MIDDLE EAST WAS OUT ONE EVENING WITH A LARGE GROUP OF LEBANESE MEN. HE HAPPENED TO MENTION CASUALLY THAT IF HE ONLY HAD SOME MONEY, HE COULD MAKE A BUNDLE (BIG PROFIT). MUCH LATER AS THE GROUP WAS BREAKING UP, ONE OF THE MEN WHOM HE DIDN'T KNOW GAVE HIM HIS CARD AND ASKED HIM TO DROP BY THE NEXT DAY. WHEN MY FRIEND CALLED, THE MAN ASKED HIM HOW MUCH MONEY HE NEEDED AND FOR HOW LONG, STATING THAT HE HAD SOME EXTRA MONEY. UPON HEARING THE AMOUNT, HE PROCEEDED TO WRITE OUT A CHECK. THE LEBANESE BUSINESSMAN DID NOT KNOW MY FRIEND PERSONALLY, BUT KNEW THAT HE WAS PART OF A PARTICULAR GROUP, AND THEREFORE TRUSTWORTHY."/

REPORTER: IN CONTRAST, PROFESSOR HALL SAID, THE AMERICAN DEPENDENCE ON CREDIT CHECKS AND PAPERWORK CAN PREVENT AMERICAN BANKERS

OP T FROM COMPETING SUCCESSFULLY WITH LOCAL BANKS IN THE

MIDDLE EAST. BY THE TIME AN AMERICAN BANK HAS DETERMINED THAT A PROSPECTIVE BORROWER IS CREDIT-WORTHY, THE CUSTOMER HAS USUALLY GONE ELSEWHERE.

REPORTER: THE PROFESSOR POINTED OUT THAT HIGH-CONTEXT CULTURES SUCH  
(CONT'D) AS THOSE OF THE MIDDLE EAST ALSO HAVE THEIR DISADVANTAGES,  
HOWEVER.

VOICE: "REFORMS COME SLOWLY. THEY'RE ALSO LIKELY TO HAVE RIGID  
CLASS STRUCTURES AND A FAMILY STRUCTURE THAT HOLDS PEOPLE  
IN A VISE. YOU CAN'T ESCAPE. YOUR OCCUPATION MAY BE  
DETERMINED BY WHAT YOUR FATHER DID. OR YOU MAY SIGN UP  
WITH AN EMPLOYER FOR LIFE AS THEY DO IN JAPAN. HIGH-CONTEXT  
CULTURES ARE MORE GROUP-ORIENTED, AND THEY SACRIFICE  
INDIVIDUALISM. INDIVIDUALS OUTSIDE THE GROUP ARE APT TO  
BE HELPLESS."

REPORTER: PROFESSOR HALL POINTED OUT THAT DIFFERENT CULTURES HANDLE  
SPACE AND TIME DIFFERENTLY. PEOPLE TEND TO STAND CLOSER  
TOGETHER IN ARAB COUNTRIES THAN THEY DO IN THE UNITED  
STATES. THE SWISS AND SCANDINAVIANS TEND TO BE MORE  
PUNCTUAL THAN AMERICANS; LATIN PEOPLES TEND TO PAY LESS  
ATTENTION TO THE CLOCK. THIS CAN CREATE TENSIONS BETWEEN  
MEMBERS OF THESE DIFFERENT CULTURES. AN AMERICAN KEPT  
WAITING IN LATIN AMERICA MAY FEEL INSULTED, WHEREAS A  
LATIN MAY FIND THE AMERICAN'S RESENTMENT ANNOYING. CROSS-  
CULTURAL DIFFERENCES COMPLICATE THE ARAB-ISRAELI STRUGGLE  
IN THE MIDEAST, AND THE RELATIONS BETWEEN BLACKS AND WHITES  
IN THE UNITED STATES. PROFESSOR HALL CONCLUDES BY PLEADING  
FOR UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT -- THE  
INTERRELATEDNESS OF PEOPLE AND THE NEIGHBORHOODS THEY  
LIVE IN, WHICH TENDS TO BE IGNORED IN AN INCREASINGLY  
LOW-CONTEXT, RATIONALISTIC WORLD:



VOICE: "IF I HAVE ONLY ONE POINT TO MAKE, IT IS THAT NOTHING IS INDEPENDENT OF ANYTHING ELSE. YET IN THE U.S. WE USE A SPECIAL-INTEREST APPROACH FOR SOLVING POLITICAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS, WHICH DISREGARDS THE INTERCONNECTEDNESS OF EVENTS. UNFORTUNATELY, OUR SCHOOLS ARE NO HELP BECAUSE THEY CONSISTENTLY TEACH US NOT TO MAKE CONNECTIONS. I FEEL STRONGLY THAT THERE SHOULD BE A FEW PEOPLE AT LEAST WHOSE TASK IS SYNTHESIS -- PULLING THINGS TOGETHER. AND THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT A DEEP SENSE OF CONTEXT."

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ANNCR: YOU'VE BEEN LISTENING TO FROM THE MAGAZINE RACK, SUMMARIES OF TIMELY ARTICLES FROM AMERICAN MAGAZINES. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT -----FOR MORE SELECTIONS . . . FROM THE MAGAZINE RACK.

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